

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GINGREY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING JACKIE WILLIAMS' SERVICE TO OUR DEPLOYED TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina, (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight a true hero of the American home front. While our brave men and women of the armed services are stationed abroad, it is more important than ever that average Americans take steps to remind our military personnel that they are not forgotten.

Jackie Williams of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is a home-front hero. Ms. Williams, who owns a candy store called Sweeties, has taken her skills as a connoisseur of sweets and used them to brighten the days of our deployed men and women.

To date, she has organized local community organizations, businesses and families to send more than 300 care packages to our troops. These packages, which she has dubbed "Goodies Ready to Eat," or GREs, have been encouraging our men and women in uniform around the world since this past July.

The work and care of Ms. Williams and those like her is a priceless contribution to our troops' morale as they are stationed around the world and away from their families. I applaud her for her commitment to showing our troops that we are thinking of them and look forward to their quick and safe return home.

WAKE FOREST MEN'S SOCCER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, I rise today in celebration of Wake Forest University's national soccer championship win this past weekend. On December 16, the Wake Forest Demon Deacons men's soccer team defeated Ohio State 2-1 in the NCAA's College Cup championship game.

The Deacons scored both of their goals in the second half to come back from a 0-1 deficit to seal the deal for a 2-1 win before a capacity crowd in Cary, North Carolina. The Deacons had 22 wins this year, and their national championship win is a fitting capstone to a long road to victory for Wake Forest soccer.

In the championship game against Ohio State, junior forward Marcus Tracy scored the Deacons' first goal to tie the game with 24 minutes left. It was Tracy's third goal of the College Cup, and helped to earn him the honor of being named the most outstanding offensive player of the College Cup. On the defensive side, goalkeeper Brian

Edwards earned the College Cup's outstanding defensive play award.

With the game tied 1-1, Zack Schilawski, a sophomore striker, scored the winning goal on a pass from Tracy with 12 minutes on the clock. This goal propelled Wake Forest to a national championship and snapped Ohio State's 15-game unbeaten streak.

I salute the fine soccer players and coaches at Wake Forest led by Coach Jay Vidovich for winning the University's first national soccer championship. Their inspiring performance is worthy of the most hearty congratulations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

NICS IMPROVEMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Madam Speaker, a few minutes ago, H.R. 2640 was passed in this House. This legislation was passed in the year 2002. Late this afternoon, the Senate passed H.R. 2640, which is the NICS bill.

Madam Speaker, this is something that I have been working on for over 11 years to try to reduce gun violence in this Nation. I'm happy to say that, with working with the NRA, the Brady Center, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. COBURN from Oklahoma and Mr. SCHUMER from New York, we have finally come together to pass legislation which, in my opinion, is going to save many lives.

This particular piece of legislation, which many of my constituents and people around the country that watch this know that I've been talking about at least once a week for the last number of years, to me, this is the best Christmas present I could ever receive.

Two weeks ago was the 14th anniversary of my husband's death, and five others. My husband and son were coming home from work, and unfortunately my husband was killed and my son was seriously injured. And it was down the road that my son was recovering that I promised him that I would do all I could to help a family not go through what myself and many other families go through, unfortunately, on a daily basis. And that day has come.

We have seen the Virginia Tech shootings. We have seen the shootings in other parts of the country in the last few weeks. This bill can help save lives, but it also shows that when opposite sides work together, which we should all be doing here in this Congress for the American people, we can do some good.

As I said earlier, I worked with the NRA and I worked with the Brady Cen-

ter, and we came together with an understanding of putting our differences aside to work out a good piece of legislation. This is a proud moment for Congress. This is a proud moment for the American people to see how we can work together.

I know that there are many on both sides of the issue that feel that some of us are just trying to take away their right to own guns. That has not ever been my intention. I have always just wanted to have gun safety issues put forth so we could save people's lives. This piece of legislation, the NICS Improvement Act, will do that.

There was a little confusion going back that we were going to be hurting our veterans. That is not true. Working with Mr. COBURN, and certainly Mr. DINGELL, we have shown that it is not going to take away the right of our veterans coming home to be able to own a gun. We have clarified the language so that there is no misunderstanding.

I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the issue on how we can reduce gun violence in this country because the more we can reduce gun violence, hopefully we can also cut down the 30,000 people that die every year.

I had mentioned last week that since I've been in Congress, 330,000 people have died. That's not counting the amount of people that are injured every single year and what it does for the health care costs of this Nation. When we spend over \$2 billion a year on health care costs for those that survive, there is something wrong.

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I am hoping that down the road I can continue to work with the NRA and continue working with the Brady Center to come up with commonsense solutions on how we can save lives without getting into the rhetoric of us trying to take away their guns or guns don't kill. That is not the debate. The debate is how are we going to keep the guns away from people that shouldn't be able to own guns.

Madam Speaker, I wish everybody a merry Christmas. This will save lives, and this is devoted to the victims that have been hurt over these many years.

I'd like to thank my good friend Congressman DINGELL for all of his hard work in making this moment a reality. I'd also like to thank my friend Senator SCHUMER for carrying this legislation through the Senate.

Today is five years in the making.

On March 12, 2002, a senseless shooting took the lives of a priest and a parishioner, Mrs. Tosner, at the Our Lady of Peace Church in Lynbrook, New York. The man who committed this double murder had a disqualifying mental health condition and a restraining order against him, but passed a background check because his personal history was not entered into the NICS database.

This same scenario happens every day.

The shooter in the Virginia Tech massacre was prohibited from purchasing a firearm. Unfortunately, flaws in the NICS system allowed his record to slip through the cracks.

He was able to purchase two handguns, and used them to brutally murder thirty two individuals. We saw this trend continue last week with shootings in Nebraska and Colorado.

Individuals who shouldn't have access to guns are getting them with ease are our killing innocent people.

The NICS system is supposed to prevent this from happening, but a database is only as good as the information put in it and many states don't have the resources to keep the NICS database up to date.

The National Instant Criminal Background Check System, or NICS, is deeply flawed.

Millions of criminal records are not accessible by ICS and millions others are missing critical data, such as arrest dispositions, due to data backlogs. The primary cause of delay in NICS background checks is the lack of updates due to funding and technology issues in the states.

Many states have not automated the records concerning mental illness, restraining orders, or misdemeanor convictions for domestic violence. Simply put, the NICS system must be updated on both the state and federal level.

According to a Third Way report, over ninety one percent of those adjudicated for mental illness cannot be stopped by a background check due to flaws in the system. But this issue allows other barred individuals to purchase firearms. Twenty five percent of felony convictions do not make it into the NICS system.

That is why I introduced the NICS Improvement Act.

My bill would require all states to provide the NICS system with the relevant records needed to conduct effective background checks. It is the state's responsibility to ensure this information is current and accurate. They must update the records to ensure violent criminals do not have access to firearms.

However, I recognize, many state budgets are already overburdened.

This legislation would provide grants to states to update their records into the NICS system. States would get the funds they need to make sure records relevant to NICS are up to date.

While the NICS system does have major flaws, it is responsible for preventing thousands of barred individuals from purchasing firearms.

Approximately nine-hundred and sixteen thousand individuals were prohibited from purchasing a firearm for failing a background check between November 30, 1998, when the NICS system began operating, and December 31, 2004.

During this same period, nearly forty nine million Brady background checks were processed through NICS. By improving upon the NICS system, we can stop criminals from falling through the cracks. Today, we are one step closer to bringing the records of millions of barred individuals into the NICS system.

No system will be perfect, but that does not mean we should not work to make improvements. This is good policy that will save lives and should be passed by the House. My legislation imposes no new restrictions on gun owners and does not infringe on the 2nd Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens. In fact, similar legislation passed the House in 2002.

Today, Congress will stand up for the victims and pass common-sense legislation. This is the best Christmas present Congress could give those whose lives have been changed by gun violence.

This legislation will help ensure that people who are legally ineligible to purchase a gun will not be able to purchase them.

This bill poses no new burden on law-abiding gun owners or gun sellers. It simply enforces current law. This legislation has the widest range of support imaginable. The National Rifle Association and the Brady Campaign have endorsed this legislation.

We have worked across both partisan and ideological aisles to make this bill law. The cooperation from members of both parties and from people on both sides of the gun issue should serve as a model for this Congress.

We can work together to find common sense solutions to our problems. These problems shouldn't divide us, but bring us together to make our country a safer and better place.

Personally, this is a very important moment for me. I have been fighting for common sense gun laws for 14 years since my own life was changed forever by gun violence.

Tonight, I'm one step closer to the goal of making sure other families never have to experience what mine did 14 years ago.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue that is so important to me and other Americans whose lives have been affected by gun violence.

PATRIOT WEEK IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of my colleagues to Patriot Week in Trenton, New Jersey. On December 26, 1776, Colonial soldiers under the command of General George Washington crossed the Delaware River and engaged in the first Battle of Trenton. As Thomas Paine wrote, this happened during "times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

On this historic day more than two centuries ago, over 2,400 patriots proved that they were not summer soldiers, battling their way through a winter sleet storm, strong winds and the ice-strewn Delaware River. Against all odds, Washington and his soldiers completed the crossing, marched silently to Trenton on Christmas night with cannon, and arrived taking the Hessian garrison by surprise. This engagement, followed by the pivotal Battle of Princeton, has been called "the beginning of the winning."

The crossing of the Delaware is a story that must be told again and again so all generations will know this

feat and the new life it gave the American Revolution. On December 26 through 31 of this year, again this year, the Trenton Downtown Association will celebrate the 131st anniversary of this history-changing event through Patriot Week, the largest Revolutionary War festival in America.

Patriot Week in the Trenton area will include over 50 events, including the reenactment of Washington's crossing of the Delaware, puppet shows and other children's activities, tours by bus and on foot, and lectures and panel discussions. These events will help pass down this great and important story to our children and to adults, the story of the War for Independence. I am sure these events will be both informative and entertaining, as they have been in previous years, and I look forward to attending some of these events myself.

I am proud that in my central New Jersey district we honor the sacrifices that were made to found this great Nation through events like Patriot Week and through the Crossroads of the American Revolution which commemorates 14 counties in New Jersey where the War for Independence took place.

However, our battles against Britain for a free and democratic nation took place in over 19 States and over two wars, and each of these States has its own unique story about its role in the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Many States, however, have not taken sufficient steps to preserve the sites of those battles. Out of the 825 significant battlefields and associated sites of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, more than 100 of these battlefields have been lost, about 250 are in fragmented or poor condition, and another 220 are in danger of being destroyed within the next few years. Therefore, some of us have sponsored here in the House of Representatives the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 Battlefield Protection Act, H.R. 160, and the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Commemorative Coin Act, H.R. 158. H.R. 160 would create a national program for the preservation of historic battlefields. It would allow officials of the American Battlefield Protection Program to collaborate with State and local governments and non-profit organizations to preserve and protect the most endangered historical sites and to provide up to 50 percent of the cost of purchasing battlefield land threatened by sprawl and commercial development. H.R. 158 would provide the necessary funding for these purchases by authorizing the creation and issuance of commemorative coins for these two wars.

History is best understood by those who have had the opportunity to touch it, experience it and live it. On December 26 through 31, over 4,000 people will be reliving the history of the Battle of Trenton during Patriot Week. It is my hope that Congress will pass H.R. 160 and H.R. 158 to allow other States the privilege of preserving their historic battlefields where their citizens, and